

Note on the occurrence of two rare triggerfishes (Balistidae) from the Gulf of Aqaba, northern Red Sea

by

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RÉSUMÉ. - Note sur la capture de deux rares espèces de balistes dans le golfe d'Aqaba, en mer Rouge septentrionale.

C'est le premier signalement de *Canthidermis macrolepis* (Boulenger, 1888) dans le golfe d'Aqaba, et la première apparition de *Abalistes stellatus* (Anonymous, 1798) sur la côte ouest du golfe. Quatre exemplaires de baliste à larges écailles et un exemplaire de baliste étoilé ont été capturés à 30 m de profondeur dans la partie nord du golfe d'Aqaba, et transférés en aquarium. Le baliste à larges écailles a été décrit par Tortonese (1954) comme espèce nouvelle, *Canthidermis longirostris*, à Dahlak (Érythrée). Gill et Randall (1997) ont mis en synonymie cette espèce avec *C. macrolepis*. Le baliste étoilé, signalé par Dor (1984) en mer Rouge, l'avait été par Khalaf et Disi (1997), mais seulement au large de la côte est du golfe d'Aqaba.

Key words. - Balistidae - *Canthidermis macrolepis* - *Abalistes stellatus* - Red Sea - Gulf of Aqaba - New records.

Dor (1984) reported *Canthidermis longirostris* Tortonese, 1954, from Dahlak (Eritrea), as a junior synonym of *C. maculatus* (Bloch, 1786). Gill and Randall (1997) redescribed *C. macrolepis* (Boulenger, 1888) from Oman and stated *C. longirostris* Tortonese, and *C. villosus* Fedoryako, 1979 as junior synonyms of this species. Randall (1995) and Debelius (1993) presented underwater photographs of specimens from Oman. *C. macrolepis* was never reported from the Gulf of Aqaba.

In his CLOFRES, Dor (1984) reported records of *Abalistes stellatus* (Anonymous, 1798), from the Red Sea proper. Khalaf and Disi (1997) recorded this species from the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba.

On May 2004, five triggerfish were caught in a commercial purse-net settled at 30 m depth, in the northern area of the Gulf of Aqaba (Fig. 1). They were transferred to the Coral World Aquaria and kept alive. Four specimens of about the same size, were identified as *C. macrolepis*, (one of them was sacrificed and donated to the HUJ collection), and another one identified as *Abalistes stellatus* died two days later and given to HUJ.

ABALISTES STELLATUS (ANONYMOUS, 1798) (Fig. 2, Tab. I)

HUJF 19112, TL 292 mm, May 2004, Eilat (North Beach), 30 m.

Body deep, compressed laterally; caudal peduncle slender and depressed; oblique deep groove in front of eye; caudal fin emarginated (somewhat double emarginated); enlarged scales behind gill opening; anal and dorsal rays not elevated; mouth small with incisoriform teeth; background colour green-olive, paler on the belly; pale spots dorsally, numerous irregular yellow spots below lateral line,

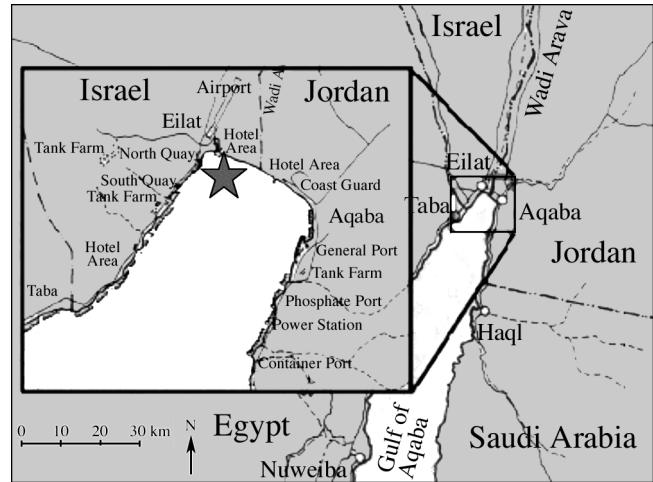


Figure 1. - Map of the Gulf of Aqaba; northern part enlarged showing the locality of the collected specimens (*). [Carte du golfe d'Aqaba avec la région septentrionale agrandie montrant la localité de capture des deux spécimens (*).]

some aligned in yellow stripes; four large white spots dorsally, one posterior to eye, the second posterior to third dorsal spine, the third at about mid soft dorsal base, the fourth smaller behind soft dorsal on caudal peduncle; a broad white streak posterior to gill opening until below middle of soft dorsal; these spots fades in preserved specimens; fins yellowish, yellow spots arranged in stripes on soft dorsal and anal.

Randall (1995) and Khalaf and Disi (1997) stated that the species might reach 60 cm. It leaves over sandy bottom and feed on benthic animals. It has no commercial value (Khalaf and Disi, 1997). The species is reported from the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf to South Africa.

CANTHIDERMIS MACROLEPIS (BOULENGER, 1888) (Fig. 3, Tab. II)

HUJF 19111, TL 339 mm, May 2004, Eilat (North Beach), 30 m.

Body compressed laterally, much slender than other members of the family; deep groove in front of eye; interorbital somewhat depressed; caudal fin double emarginated; absence of enlarged scales behind gill opening; soft dorsal and anal elevated and of about same size; caudal peduncle not slender, about as long as wide; scales larger on the posterior side of the body, presenting a strong middle ridge elongated as a spine; mouth small with incisoriform teeth; background colour olive-green, paler on the belly; pale spots dorsally, numerous irregular yellow spots below lateral line,

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Figure 2. - *Abalistes stellatus*, SL 265 mm, HUJF 19112.

Table I. - Comparison of the meristics of *Abalistes stellatus* from the Gulf of Oman (Randall, 1995), and from Aqaba (Khalaf and Disi, 1997) with the collected specimen, HUJF 19112. [Comparaison des caractères méristiques de *Abalistes stellatus* du golfe d'Oman (Randall, 1995), et d'Aqaba (Khalaf et Disi, 1997) avec ceux du spécimen collecté, HUJF 19112.]

Counts and measurements	HUJF 19112	Khalaf and Disi, 1997	Randall, 1995
TL (mm)	292		
SL (mm)	265	106-180	
Body depth	108		
Body depth in SL	2.4	1.8	2.0-2.5
Head length (mm)	77		
Head length in SL	3.4	2.6-2.8	
Eye diameter	20		
Snout length (mm)	53		
Dorsal fins	III, 26	III, 27	III, 25-27
Pectoral	14	15	15-16
Pelvic	I, 8		
Anal	24	25 - 26	24-25
Caudal rays	12		
Vertebrae	18		
Lateral line scales	40 + 5 on caudal		33-41

form four teeth on each side of jaws; background colour brown, apex and trailing edges of soft dorsal and anal whitish, differing from Randall's (1995) description of these fins as blackish; pectoral fins margin paler.

According to Randall (1995), *Canthidermis macrolepis* reaches 60 cm, and was recorded from Oman. This is a pelagic species reaching shallow waters during spawning season. According to Gill and Randall (1997) *Canthidermis macrolepis* was recorded in the Red Sea. It was misidentified by Tortonese (1954) as *Canthidermis longirostris* n.sp. The present report is the first record of the species in the Gulf of Aqaba.

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Figure 3. - *Canthidermis macrolepis*, SL 299 mm, HUJF 19111.

Table II. - Comparison of the meristics of *Canthidermis macrolepis* from the Gulf of Oman (Randall, 1995; Gill and Randall, 1997), and from Dahlak (Tortonese, 1954), with the collected specimen, HUJF 19111. [Comparaison des caractères méristiques de *Canthidermis macrolepis* du golfe d'Oman (Randall, 1995 ; Gill et Randall, 1997), et de Dahlak (Tortonese, 1954) avec ceux du spécimen collecté, HUJF 19111.]

Counts and measurements	HUJF 19111	Tortonese, 1954	Randall, 1995	Gill and Randall, 1997
TL (mm)	339			
SL (mm)	299	365		444-457
Body depth	114	110		
Body depth in SL	2.6		3.0-4.4	
Body depth in %SL	38.1			27.9-29.3
Head length (mm)	76	97		
Head length in %SL	25.4	26.5		26.0-27.5
Eye diameter	15	18		
Eye diameter in %SL	5.0	4.9		4.6-4.7
Snout length (mm)	44			
Snout in %SL	14.7			17.1-17.8
Dorsal fins	III, 25	III, 26	III, 23-26	III, 25-26
Pectoral	15		14-15	15-16
Pelvic	I			
Anal	23	24	21-23	23
Caudal rays	12			
Vertebrae	19			18
Lateral line scales	42-43	38	35-40	37-39

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